

VZCZCXRO5819
OO RUEHDBU RUEHIK RUEHPW RUEHYG
DE RUEHBUL #1123/01 0951112
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 051112Z APR 07
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7300
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE
RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 0373
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
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SUBJECT: PRT/BADGHIS: SPAIN IMPROVES EDUCATION

SUMMARY

11. (U) The civilian component of the Spanish PRT recently launched the latest part of its plan to improve the provincial government's ability to meet the educational needs of the people of Badghis Province. They plan to erect temporary tent schools at 160 locations identified by the Education Ministry, and to construct ten permanent schools province-wide. The tent schools will also provide a province-wide symbol of the provincial government's efforts to address the educational concerns of locals. The program is funded by the Spanish Development Agency (AECI) and has strong buy-in from both the provincial and local levels. This project promises to be the most visible symbol of development in many parts of the province that lack the necessary level of security for longer-term development projects. The program could serve as a best practice for those looking to quickly improve both the image of local government and the ability of the Education Ministry to meet the needs of local residents. END SUMMARY.

Locals Involved in School Construction

12. (U) As spring makes roads passable and construction possible throughout Badghis Province, the Spanish Development Agency (AECI) is launching a plan to greatly increase the capacity of the Education Ministry to meet the needs of Badghis residents province-wide. Lack of security in over half the province prohibits long-term development projects, but these relatively low-tech initiatives can be completed in a short time period, often by companies based in the problematic districts themselves. AECI plans to utilize as many local contractors as possible to mitigate the security concerns, speed construction, and provide local jobs. The 160 tent schools will be erected on 10 by 4 meter cement slabs in locations previously selected to receive permanent buildings when funding and local security conditions make construction possible. AECI will send locally engaged staff to the remote districts to monitor construction. The

provincial Education Ministry generated the list of proposed school locations and committed to providing teachers for each school and local residents donated the land to accommodate the school in their area.

Temporary School Will Be Replaced with Permanent Ones

13. (U) In addition to the 160 tent schools, AECI is planning to build at least ten permanent schools this year to complement those already constructed by other donors. NGO World Vision (WV) is also constructing schools in Badghis and both WV and AECI will coordinate with the Education Ministry to replace the temporary tent schools with permanent buildings. AECI director Pablo Yuste opined that the tent school project was designed to meet the immediate provincial need for schools and "buy time" to provide permanent schools as funding and security permit. He stressed that AECI is committed to replacing all 160 schools with permanent structures.

Local Education Ministry: Key Role is Setting Up Schools

14. (U) The Education Ministry has played a central role in liaising with local communities and selecting the school locations. In addition to ensuring that each new school location fits within the Province's Development Plan and the Education Ministry's long-term education plans, the Ministry has worked to ensure that it will have teachers available for each of the new schools. By constructively engaging the

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Education Ministry in all phases of the tent school project, AECI has helped develop the Ministry's administrative capacity and ensured that the provincial government is seen by locals as the driving force behind the project. The opening of 160 tent schools throughout the province will serve as a prime example of the provincial government's ability to provide basic services.

Schools Help Build Confidence in Government

15. (U) Education, along with healthcare and potable water, is one of the most pressing needs in Badghis. Local elders from villages without a school point to the lack of an educational facility as a symbol of GOA ineffectiveness. By working with local elders to select school locations, the Education Ministry is increasing confidence in local government. The fact that each of the 160 tent schools and 10 permanent schools are being built on land provided by the residents of local communities demonstrates both the local buy-in for the project AND the wide-spread support education-related projects have.

Security Still A Major Issue

16. (U) Security is a major concern in Badghis. In the past, night letters against clinics and schools were common and officials worry that successful attacks could weaken local support for the GOA. To lessen the impact of possible violent action, AECI conceived of this "blitz approach": quickly constructing tent schools in many areas that have historically been insecure. AECI hopes that local buy-in will encourage residents to protect their schools, but in the event of an attack it would only be an attack against one of many schools, which AECI hopes would lessen the psychological effect of such an incident. AECI also hopes that the flurry of construction related to the 160 tent schools will detract attention from the construction of the ten permanent schools,

lessening the likelihood of an attack against one of them.

COMMENT

17. (U) The tent schools are only a short-term fix to the very real education needs in Badghis, but they will provide a place for thousands of students to learn while plans to build permanent schools go forward. The project should help demonstrate to local residents that the GOA, with the help of the donor community, is making progress in providing basic services, even in areas with limited security. This project could serve as a best practice for other provinces looking for ways to rapidly improve both the image of the provincial government and the level of education in local communities.
END COMMENT.
NEUMANN